



# Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

Doctrinal Catechesis Sessions for adults based on  
the Church Year, the Liturgy, & the Sunday Scriptures

## Breaking Open the Word

by Mary Birmingham

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year C



Sperindio Cagnola, Feed the hungry, 1514 -24, Paruzzaro, San Marcello Church

“Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”  
Luke 14: 13-14



## Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

### *Prayer for Generosity*

*St. Ignatius of Loyola*

*Eternal Word,  
only begotten Son of God,  
Teach me true generosity.  
Teach me to serve you as you deserve.  
To give without counting the cost,  
To fight heedless of wounds,  
To labor without seeking rest,  
To sacrifice myself without thought of any reward  
Save the knowledge that I have done your will.  
Amen.*

**Catholic  
Faith, Life  
& Creed**  
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Breaking Open the  
Word worksheets  
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Faith, Life, & Creed*  
Doctrinal Sessions.

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## Liturgical Context

- ▶ The Gospels of these weeks are from the section of Luke's Gospel that takes place "on the way to Jerusalem." It is a journey every Christian must take.
- ▶ For the next three weeks we will hear eight of Jesus' parables.
- ▶ The liturgies of these weeks invite us to pay close attention to living the moral life. Today the virtue of humility takes front and center stage.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one of the readings.

## Reading 1: Sirach 3:17-18, 28-29

- ▶ The Book of Sirach is a catechism on how to live a moral, disciplined life.
- ▶ The author of today's reading refers to the reader as "my son".
- ▶ That salutation alone is an invitation for the reader to adopt an attitude of humility.
- ▶ The reading extols the virtue of a humble, well-disciplined disciple.
- ▶ The antithesis of humility is horrific sin of arrogant pride.
- ▶ A humble person keeps his or her eyes on God and less on their own concerns.
- ▶ The connection of this reading to the Gospel is obvious—it is a treatise on the merits of humility.
- ▶ It is more important and at the same time more difficult for the wealthy to assume a posture of humility.
- ▶ An Israelite theology of humility understands the virtue as acknowledging the glory of God.
- ▶ A humble person is aware of his or her source—a humble person abandons his or her life to God's care. A humble person understands that without God life is impotent and meaningless.



## Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a "brief" story from his or her life. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?

- ▶ Who do you know that you would consider a humble person? Describe why you think that person is humble—what characteristic does that person possess and demonstrate?
- ▶ What are some humble characteristics within you?
- ▶ What might you do to develop the virtue of humility in your own life?

## Second Reading: Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24a

- ▶ The author of Hebrews challenges the disciple to live a moral life and thus strengthen oneself from becoming lackadaisical or worse to fall away from the faith.
- ▶ The author looks to life under the Law and compares it to life in Christ—the new covenant—eternal life—heaven.
- ▶ God ordained the new law—it is realized eschatology—living in the kingdom of God/heaven on earth now as we await the eternal banquet in heaven.
- ▶ The author compares the law with the Gospel. He reassures those who are still walking the Christian walk on earth who are living in the tension of “now and not yet”.
- ▶ The “firstborn” of verse twenty-three is a possible reference to believers in general or to the angels in verse twenty-two.
- ▶ The reference to fire is as always in Biblical parlance, a reference to the presence of God—especially as he appeared on Mount Sinai.
- ▶ Jesus’ Paschal Mystery inaugurated the new covenant—God’s new Word for believers.
- ▶ Through the Word we are brought into deeper intimacy with God.
- ▶ Baptism provides the *firstborn/believer* access to the living God and his promise to be with us through the covenant Christ established through his life, death and resurrection.
- ▶ Believers live in the company of the faithful of the past, the faithful of the present and the faithful of the future.



## Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a “brief” story or reflection from his or her life. See appendix #2 for an example.

- ▶ What does it mean to you that we are living in realized eschatology—that is the kingdom of God on earth as we wait for the kingdom of God in heaven? What are the implications for your life?
- ▶ In what way have you been brought into or experienced a deeper intimacy with God?



- ▶ What does it mean to you that baptism gives us access to the new covenant Jesus' came to inaugurate? While that can sound very religious and theological, it does have implications for our lives. What are those implications?

## Gospel: Luke 14, 1; 7-14

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

## Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.) Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?
- ▶ Jesus creates two hypothetical situations.
- ▶ In one situation the guest took it upon himself to assume a place of honor at the table. The host was forced to send him to a lower place because a higher dignitary arrived that was more entitled to his seat. The guest therefore embarrassed himself. Nothing could be worse in that shame based culture. For a person to assume an exalted seat at the table left that person open to even greater shame. A person of higher status could come and take his place, thus relegating him to a lower place—a situation normally to be avoided at all costs.
- ▶ The other situation in Jesus' parable is the guest who was taken to a more exalted place of honor at the table because he did not seek a higher place in the first place.
- ▶ The host calls the guest "my friend" thus indicating an intimate relationship and an equality with the guest.
- ▶ The bottom line? Those who seek places of honor are shamed; those who do not seek such honor and instead choose the lower place are rewarded. They are invited to the head of the table. They become the guest of honor.
- ▶ The implication? The Christian is to avoid self-aggrandizement and arrogant, self-serving pride.
- ▶ Jesus was having dinner with a contentious Pharisee. He knew attempts would be made to trap him. Thus, the dinner was hardly friendly and Jesus was not being rude to his host by slapping him in the face with these accusatory parables. He was very cleverly beating the Pharisees at their own game. He turned their hypocritical behavior on end and used it to accuse themselves. The parables were a challenge to them and the self-righteous, pride-filled behavior they displayed.
- ▶ He moved from parable to exhortation. He challenged listeners that if they truly want to be exalted then they are to go out and gather the lowly and invite them to places of honor—the poor, the lame, the low class—those who do not have the means to reciprocate. Reward will be given in heaven not here.
- ▶ Luke includes all those who are considered on the outside—the lame, the crippled, the blind—all those who the old law (at Qumran) excluded from the final banquet at the end of days. The "poor" include all those who are the outside looking in.

- ▶ Jesus' message was not simply a catechism on humility. Jesus insisted that believers are not to seek honor from human beings, but should be more concerned with how God sees them. It is God's respect they should seek.
- ▶ Pharisees sought the honor of other human beings by giving them places of honor at the table thus expecting the guest to reciprocate in kind. Jesus insists that they should extend hospitality to the lowly and expect their reward from God—not other people.
- ▶ Jesus does not directly castigate the Pharisees; he uses the parable as a teachable moment for everyone—not just his target audience.
- ▶ Jesus' message is not just for the self-righteous arrogant few it is for everyone. We are all to go out and invite in the lowly—invite them to our table as equals. When was the last time the poor and lowly had a place of honor at our table?



## Mystagogy

### reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface the insights in the wider group. Catechist begins by sharing story from his or her life. See appendix #3 for an example. (@ Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ In what way is this a relevant word for us today?
- ▶ In what way have you observed or are aware of behavior like that of the Pharisees?
- ▶ If you are introduced to a wealthy person and a homeless person what is your honest reaction to both? Do most people treat them equally? Do you? What does Jesus have to say about it?
- ▶ How tempting is it to be more concerned about how your good deeds look to others rather than how important it is to simply engage in the good deed in the first place?
- ▶ Name a good deed you have done at some point in your life. Have you ever helped someone less advantaged than yourself? How did it make you feel?
- ▶ Is there really such a thing as a truly altruistic action? Is Jesus asking more than we can give? How can we conceivably live up to his expectations in today's Gospel with a clean heart and not for some ulterior motive?

Catechist invites participants to silently reflect on the following question.

- ▶ After reflection on today's liturgy, what one thing is God asking of you at this time in your life?
- ▶ What obstacles stand in the way of following God's call?

## CONCLUDING PRAYER

Repeat OPENING PRAYER for this session OR Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

## APPENDIX

#1. My boss, my pastor is the humblest person I know. He is an extremely committed, prayerful, talented servant of the Lord. His writings have helped thousands, his leadership, preaching his and teaching has transformed two parishes; his example of humble discipleship challenges us all. He seeks no praise or glory and is embarrassed by it when it is proffered. There is not an arrogant, pride-filled bone in his body. He gives God the glory for all he has and all that he is. His life is rooted in prayer. Every person who approaches him is treated fairly and equally regardless of agenda, posturing or ideologies. I can only hope to be the disciple he is. There is hope for me because I am privileged to watch him.

#2. The more I realize what it means that God lives within, the more I come to realize what it means to live in the tension of the kingdom of God now and not yet. I live in this world yet my focus must be not just on the concerns of this world but also more importantly on my relationship with God.

The more I grow in prayer, the more I become aware of my participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Rather than seeing my spiritual life as *out there*—or something I have to look for—I have been invited to see the Christ who lives within. Regardless of the cares of this world that can consume me, when I yield to the Christ who lives within I become aware of the Spirit who is constantly at prayer within me. When I become consistent in that awareness and that prayer I am able to turn the concerns of this life over to God and realize that no matter what the concern is it is transitory and is nothing when considered in light of the goal that lies ahead. There are days that I am able to yield to this truth and other days when I still try to control the events of my life.

# 3. A few months ago an usher told a homeless man that he had to leave the premises. The man was obviously mentally ill and wanted to attend Mass. The man was unkempt and had little or no hygiene. He was not disruptive in the sense of being noisy, but he certainly did not “belong” to our middle class community.

It is exactly such people that Jesus went out of his way to bring to the head of the table. I once heard a homilist say that if Jesus were here he would escort such a man to the front of the church and enthrone him in the chair right next to his—the presider's chair. That image has always stayed with me. Are we really ready to do as Jesus asks us to do in this Gospel?

Those of us who create social concerns offices off campus to meet the needs of the poor and lowly are to be commended for our fine efforts, but perhaps the next step is to bring such people to the front pew of our Sunday liturgies. The first step is commendable and easy. The second step means we have to rub shoulders and affirm that we are equals. I think Jesus is asking me/us if I/we truly believe that. If not, we had better pray for conversion. Jesus associated with the rabble of his day. When was the last time we brought such “rabble” into our assemblies?

Jesus is giving us the antidote for our arrogant pride. The way we grow in humility is to discipline ourselves by going out to the highways and byways to gather in the poor, the lame, the blind and the oppressed.





# Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's  
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

Eschatology  
Catholic Social Teaching  
Nicene Creed  
Morality

Moral Decision Making  
Symbol of Bread and Wine  
Eucharist Series

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

## ESCHATOLOGY

Today's second reading reminds us that we live in the kingdom of God now and not yet. Jesus teaches us how we are to live in that kingdom as we await the eternal kingdom of eternity. Thus, today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about ESCHATOLOGY.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Jesus exhorts us to adopt the virtue of humility, to avoid places of honor and to go out into the world and invite the poor, the sick and the marginalized to places of honor at the Lord's Table. This is the heart of CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING which is the focus of our extended doctrinal session today.

## NICENE CREED

The second reading today calls us to reflect on the new covenant that Christ forged through his Paschal mystery. That covenant is affirmed every time we celebrate the Eucharist. We profess faith in the truths of that covenant every time we profess the Nicene Creed. The NICENE CREED in the doctrinal extended session.

## MORALITY

Today's liturgy is a call to live the moral life. It is a call to adopt the virtue of humility and to live according to the moral imperatives of the Gospel. Jesus is very explicit in what it means to live a moral life. One of the many exhortations he has given to us is the command to be humble and to reach out to the lowly and the poor. The focus of our extended session today will be MORALITY.

## **MORAL DECISION MAKING**

Today's first reading is a call to live the moral life. It is a call to remember the promises made to Abraham that we would be his heirs—called to be righteous and holy in God's eyes. The concern in the Book of Wisdom is that the people were losing their religious identity—they were being influenced by pagan influences. It is very easy to succumb to such temptations. Commitment to the moral life is a way we maintain our religious heritage and identity. In order to remain faithful to that commitment we must make correct and right moral choices. Thus the focus of today's extended doctrinal session will be MORAL DECISION MAKING.

## **SYMBOL OF BREAD AND WINE**

Jesus alludes to table fellowship in today's parable. We are all invited to the wedding feast in which we all stand equal before God. It is the Eucharist that strengthens us to embrace the humility that Jesus calls forth in us today. Thus it would be an appropriate time to reflect on the Eucharist and the SYMBOL OF BREAD AND WINE.

## **EUCCHARIST SERIES:**

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part \_\_\_\_ of the Eucharistic Series.